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FIVE  
CHRISTMAS POEMS









William J. Smith

1880



For the Fast and  
Chapel Library.

With the Author's

Affectionate Remembrance.

---

FIVE CHRISTMAS POEMS

Askeham Vicarage.

Peruiter.

January 1<sup>st</sup> 1896.

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NEW-STREET SQUARE

# FIVE CHRISTMAS POEMS

BY

GAGE EARLE FREEMAN, M.A.

“PEREGRINE”

AUTHOR (WITH CAPTAIN SALVIN) OF

“FALCONRY : ITS CLAIMS, HISTORY, AND PRACTICE”  
ETC. ETC.

LONDON

LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, AND ROBERTS

1860

AND



DEDICATION

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TO THE

**COUNTRY HOMES OF ENGLAND**

THESE POEMS ARE DEDICATED

WITH THE BEST CHRISTMAS WISHES

OF

THE AUTHOR




## PREFACE.

---

THE following Poems appeared severally, year by year, in the *Field*. They were accepted, I believe, as it was intended they should be, by many a country fireside-circle, at Christmas time. They claimed no better place than that which they shared with Christmas games, music, dancing, and all other innocent mirth. Read aloud, they filled up an interval. I offer them now, together with one or two occasional pieces, in a convenient, and, I venture to hope, an acceptable form.

G. E. F.



Wild Boar Clough Parsonage, Cheshire:  
Christmas, 1860.



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## Christmas Poems

B

12



## CHRISTMAS 1856.



### I.

THE virgin snow lies on the hills,  
The yule-log on the fire ;  
The slanting sunbeam falls, and fills  
An Old Year's heart—which the keen air chills—  
With the warm bright stream that love distils ;  
For it blesses the bare woods, unshackles the rills,  
And clings to the grey church spire.

## II.

Hail, brother ! of the sinew strong  
To pass the heathery hill along,  
Whose slipp'ry rocks with lichen grey  
Make for thy sport a dangerous way !  
Well art thou school'd to patience rare,  
At once the game, the dogs, thy care ; —  
Well art thou school'd to iron nerve,  
That neither hand nor eye may swerve  
When sudden, from the toil-reach'd height,  
Spring the strong grouse with whirring flight.  
Perchance, in dire perplexing hour,  
When others shrink, shall live *thy* power ;  
When others hesitate or quail,  
Thine the quick brain that cannot fail ;  
When weak men faint, when mad men rave,  
Be thine to reason—and to save !

## III.

Lord of the stirrup and the hound  
The ringing shout and bugle-sound !  
The merry cry that strains thy throat  
Thy woods have heard from years remote,  
When thy great grand-sire sought the trail  
Ere day had raised her matin veil,  
And all his merry men were up  
With horse and hound and stirrup cup ! —  
Those were the days of joyous glee,  
Kind words, and hospitality :  
Then, *then* was merry England *free* !  
Son of such sire ! be thine the heart,  
Like his, to feel for misery's smart :  
Be thine, when peril haunts the land,  
And prudence calls her marshall'd band,  
Be thine the heart—and thine the hand !

## IV.

Friends of the rod, the fly, the creel,  
The flashing stream, the whirling reel ;  
Friends of the leash, when hare is found  
Hardy, to breathe your best gaze-hound ;  
Friends of the sport of ancient days,  
When dames and gallants sang thy praise,  
Friends of the falcon (Heaven defend !  
My bonny bird hath scarce a friend)—  
*All hail !* whose skill doth fortune dare  
By land, by water, or by air !

## V.

My dogs before the yule-log lie ;  
Closed is each quick and watchful eye ;  
Yet ever and anon they bend  
A slow red glance upon their friend :

Their evening meal is ta'en, and then  
They rest like turtled aldermen.  
My falcon sits upon my glove,  
Unhooded sits, nor cares to move ;  
Her bells of silver, brighten'd fair,  
Ring in the clear and Christmas air—  
Sudden a silver call I blow ;  
Ah, Cheviot ! why dost tremble so ?  
Is it the cold ?— for every plume  
Shakes as if struck with ague-doom.  
Nay ; well I know my noble bird  
    Small care hath for the cold,  
That call her memory hath stirr'd,  
When late, half spent with hope deferr'd,  
    We traced the weary wold—  
And sudden, on his dark strong wing,  
    And rising wild and far,  
The blackcock fled like stone from sling—



*Down  
came*

My whistle made the welkin ring—

~~Up rose~~ the hawk with gallant swing! —

The warhorse for the war,

The jovial hound where huntsmen ride,

The polish'd tube for marksman's pride,

The rod to rob the sparkling tide—

But, oh! for sport and me,

That falcon, as with lightning's stroke

Full on the giant prey she broke,

And smote him gallantly,—

Then, waiting for her master dear,

Spread her dark wings to hail him near!

VI.

Our hounds are fed—our hawks at rest—

'Tis merry Christmas-tide;

Best on our board, and now the best

Our cellar doth not hide.

Bethink we, brothers ! near our door  
Who live that lack a Christmas store—  
Who lack, perchance, what we should deem  
Hard fare on mountain or by stream !  
But hark ! the bells impatient now  
Nigh shake the old church spire;  
Come, raise thy bonnet to thy brow,  
And take thy lady wife with thee,  
And call thy children to thy knee,  
And tell them Christmas-day should be  
Kept in their Great Friend's memory,  
And go to church. Sir Squire.  
Then let us all, with hearts at rest,  
In blessing others be most blest,  
Rememb'ring one divine behest—  
“ Do unto others, as must be  
Thy hope that they shall do to thee ! ”

My whistle made the welkin ring—

Up rose the hawk with gallant swing!—

The warhorse for the war,

The jovial hound where huntsmen ride,

The polished tube for marksman's pride,

The reel to rob the sparkling tide—

But, oh! for sport and me,

That falcon, as with lightning's stroke

Fell on the giant prey she broke,

And smote him gallantly,—

Then, waiting for her master dear,

Spread her dark wings to hail him near!

# VI.

Our hounds are fed—our hawks at rest—

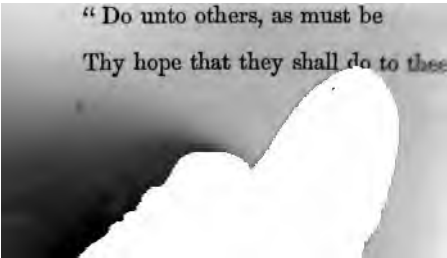
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Then let us all, with hearts at rest,  
In blessing others be most blest,  
Rememb'ring one divine behest—

" Do unto others, as must be  
Thy hope that they shall do to thee."



## CHRISTMAS 1857.



## I.

A SHARP air drives the mist from dale and hill ;  
Each little twig stands out against the sky  
In knots of frosty network ; smooth and still  
Rests the fair stream — turbid so late, and high ;  
Swifter in rarer air my falcons fly ;  
Man's brain grows keen, braced by the glorious  
clime —  
Now crowds the Past in eager memory :  
Listen ! Through far-off years old church bells chime !  
Once more—oh yet once more—my boyhood's  
Christmas time.

## II.

An erring snowball bursting on a wall—  
In glassy length a long, cold, glorious slide—  
One chubby urchin roaring o'er his fall—  
The shouting crew that past in triumph glide—  
Stately these legs, and those how straggling wide!—  
The swollen hands that string and riddle lay—  
A man of snow, one shivering sculptor's pride;—  
Heaven teach us wisdom now! But where are they  
The earnest, eager hours of that dear holiday?

## III.

Dost think the berries are as bright as then?  
The snow as white, the nipping air as keen?  
What tho' the widgeon tumble on the fen—  
Where is the chaffinch with his breast of sheen  
Few greyhounds beat thy Barbican I ween;

Where is stout Pincher, and the rat of yore?  
A ragged Shetland hath thy hunter been;  
And when old Dixon brought him to the door,  
*That was the proudest day—come days for evermore!*

## IV.

But prate of boyhood as you will,  
The honest pulse beats loyal still,  
And still old Christmas deck'd is seen  
In coronet of holly green;  
And if our hair hath snowy streak,  
'Tis borrow'd from the mountain's peak;  
And friends, by many a season tried,\*  
Are round our hearth and by our side :

---

\* Brave Gael, my pass in danger tried,  
Hangs at my belt, and by my side.

*Lady of the Lake, canto v. 4.*

Ah, well aday ! perchance we own  
The image of our young life gone, —  
Perchance some merry shout at last  
Brings back the voices of the Past,  
Such beaming eyes, such step so gay,  
Gladden'd another Christmas-day, —  
For, in the laughing boistrous train,  
We live — and love to live — again !

## v.

The little spire shows grey and cold,  
And snow has lined each buttress old ;  
But, joyous still, the clear bells ring,  
And a crowd to the Porch are gathering.  
Old Janie Brown has a cloak at last,  
And she wraps it tight, and she holds it fast ;  
Her limping spouse — old “sodjer John,”  
Has fought in Spain with Wellington ;



And little he reck'd of cold or heat  
In other years, when his limbs were fleet,  
When his arm was strong, and his eye was gay :  
But his old heart is true and stout to-day,  
And it beats 'neath a wrapper warm and grey.

## VI.

Brother ! didst *give* old Janie the cloak ?  
Didst give old John the rug ?  
For that prattling line of little folk  
Was it *you* that the pies and the beer "bespoke"  
In the great room warm and snug ?

## VII.

Because, when you are old and weak,  
From the Strongest Arm when the staff you seek —  
When shiv'ring on the brink of years,  
You look for a raiment mid hopes and fears —

Will it be *then* in Janie's croak,  
In John's crack'd voice, that the thanks be spoke ?  
Will children's lips the blessing invoke ?  
Ay ! let them smile and curtsey now,  
And scrape the foot, and bare the brow :  
I tell thee, Squire, on thy dying day,  
Divine shall seem their mortal clay ;  
And the voice of God shall speak through them,  
And their hands shall bear thee a diadem ;  
For thy fading senses on life shall seize,  
    *These* words shall be life to thee —  
“ Inasmuch as ye did it unto these,  
    Ye did it unto ME ! ” \*

## VIII.

Stir we the fire ! the embers light,  
My honest guests, your welcome bright.

---

\* St. Matthew, xxv. 40.

What of the year? hath sport gone well?  
What of the grouse? nay, *thou* canst tell,  
Lord of the gun invincible!  
What of the fly whose light wings quiver  
Each summer on that northern river?  
I know how it hath flown of late,  
The artist's hand how delicate;—  
The monarch of the stream looked high,  
He mark'd it 'twixt him and the sky,  
Sudden he left his craggy stone,  
He flung him from his river-throne:  
Alas! sad king!—to thee alone  
Hath tinsel to ambition toss'd  
The glory of an empire lost?

## IX.

'Tis thus we chat and moralise,  
Now trifling all—now nicely wise.

And Reynard hath his honours too—  
How bravely broke he, full in view,  
To tally-ho and loud halloo.  
Then tell I, as adventures crowd,  
How flash'd my Merlins thro' the cloud,  
And show the wild lark's spurs of length,  
The treasured trophies of their strength.  
Send up the wine! adventures tire,  
Send up the wine, and stir the fire!

## X.

Alas! the wine hath lack'd its power,  
Fails of its charm the evening hour;  
The snow without, the fire within,  
A gloomy thought were gloomy sin.  
Why sinks the laugh? that troubled eye,  
That sombre dress—Grief's livery—  
Look up! for *they* can tell thee *why*.

From other shores, Death hath a voice  
That ever dares thee to rejoice ;  
And ever, — thus it seems to thee —  
Some loved ones beckon o'er the sea ;  
They seem to haunt thy Christmas hearth,  
They pray to share thy Christmas mirth.—  
Thy *mirth*! Great Heaven! they cannot come  
As erst unto their childhood's home ;  
For none were blither then than they,  
None merrier made thy childhood's play,  
Or graced thy manhood's holiday.

## XI.

Where is the gentle eye,  
And the fair cheek, soft and warm,  
And the fingers that flew o'er the ivory key  
And the tongue whose tone was melody,  
Whose words of love ~~that~~ were life to thee,  
In the strife of the world's rude storm ?

•

Where is the strong right hand,  
And the soldier's noble brow ?  
They lie beneath the scorching sand  
In the desert-grave of that fearful land,  
They lie all lonely now !

## XII.

Arise! it is not hate  
That brother to brother should give ;  
Past seventy times—be it soon or late—  
Thy *brother* thou shalt forgive.  
But, by the God Who made the weak,  
And the strong the weak to save—  
By woman's wail, and children's shriek—  
By the blood of shame that burns the cheek—  
By the *abject* shame ye dare not speak—  
Brothers! His holy vengeance wreak  
Beyond that long dark wave.

With fiends, not brethren dear,  
Ye fight for the dear ones' sake;  
And the sheathèd sword, and the slumab'ring spear,  
Did never such cause awake.  
This is no barb'rous raid,  
No struggle for land or gold!  
O gird ye now for the best crusade  
That ever a righteous cause hath made,  
That ever a Christian host essay'd  
In the great world— young or old!

## XIII.

Soldiers! if e'er ye faint awhile  
In scorching march for many a mile;  
If e'er, one moment, flagging Zeal  
Grasp with uncertain hand her steel;  
If e'er, encircled all, ye stand  
Outnumber'd, like the Spartan band;

Think of the *long hair on the wall*,  
The prayers for pity — scoff'd at all, —  
    The outrage deep and fell !  
O, who a man and would not give  
All — all of life one hour to live  
To strike one stroke in Britain's name,  
To wash away with blood the shame  
    Of CAWNPORE's gory well !  
Press onward where the dastards fly,  
    Press where your banner waves ;  
And, as the swarthy murderers die,  
Ring still to Heaven, appealing high,  
The vengeance of your battle-cry —  
    “ The Ladies and the Babes ! ” \*

---

\* “ The Ladies and the Babes ! ” the shout with which some of our troops have gone into action.



## XIV.

Well *have* ye fought ; — a deep red stain  
Sinks yet thro' India's fatal plain ;  
That Blood hath voice,— it cries aloud  
To us from yonder warrior crowd,  
Cold e'en beneath heaven's burning shroud.  
Long shall it tell, in tones elate,  
The glories of the CASHMERE GATE —  
Tell to the world *what* hearts can dare  
Death, in the rage of his despair,  
    As in fair battle's strife;  
How fell brave NEIL, in glorious fray,—  
From NICHOLSON how pass'd away  
    The ling'ring sands of life.  
Aye, thus it speaks ! But look along  
Proud lines of that heroic throng

Where every heart is brave !  
Still WILSON, OUTRAM, INGLIS live,  
Its chivalry rude war to give ;  
Still GREATHED'S columns save.  
For *thee*, thou star of Britain's hope,  
Spared still with Britian's foes to cope,  
For thee ten thousand knees are bent,  
Ten thousand prayers to Heaven are sent  
That long, long years may see thee wear  
Her coronet of glory fair :  
God give thee skill in doubtful hour,  
Guard thee in peril, and in power,  
And in the battle's shock !  
Blest be thy name in other days,  
Graced with Fame's wreath of noblest bays —  
God save thee, HAVELOCK !

## XV.

Stir we the fire ! look how one vig'rous stroke  
Hath dash'd the glowing embers into blaze !  
That leaping flame the baneful spell hath broke ;  
No more each strange fantastic shape displays  
Fortress and troops, where War his ranks arrays,  
But jovial faces, quaintly gay and rare ;—  
Thus holy Christmas-tide stern grief allays :  
O more than summer bright, than Spring more fair !  
Brothers, one Christmas more—and I to greet you  
there !

---

## THE DEATH OF GENERAL SIR HENRY HAVELOCK.

“There be of them that have left a NAME behind them, that their praises might be reported.” — *Ecclesiasticus*, xlv. 8.



### I.

THE “Laurel and the Cypress,”—an old tale

Told to rent hearts, and read by weeping eyes ;

A sadd'ned glory,—as when dim clouds veil

The giant mounds, from common earth that rise,

While, radiant all, their bright peaks touch the  
skies.

Great Chief! the tempest-rack of tears shall be  
Dried up in Glory. Love, that never dies,  
And Fame, whose light is immortality,  
*These* are the Suns that shone, that aye shall shine,  
on thee !

## II.

What is the gleam of steel—the wingèd lead ?  
They mock'd at these who round thee lived and  
died.  
At morn the battle-blast—at eve a bed  
Scoop'd in the ground, or safe by comrade's side.  
Thou wast their life, brave HAVELOCK, thou their  
pride ;  
'Twas victory if thou didst lead the way ;  
Death could not smite that heart of courage tried  
But *through itself* : vain were his shafts of clay  
To touch the glorious life that in that temple lay.

## III.

Weak women, little children—belted knight,  
Thou of the lion heart!—it was thy share  
To guard such treasure from the plunderer's might.

'Twere easy shot and shell and steel to dare—  
But O the pangs of that corroding care;

*They* found the mortal part—"Lay me not low  
Till these are safe, Great God! the young, the  
fair!"

He kept them safe. With glory on his brow,  
O more than Battle gives, blest lies the Warrior now!

## CHRISTMAS 1858.



## I.

I COME with my cloak of snow,  
And my feet of slipp'ry frost —  
Mortal ! I come with my seer's voice low,  
From my glacier-cave in the twilight far —  
I come from my home 'neath the Northern Star.  
To tell thee what thou hast LOST.

## II.

Thou hast lost,  
In my rack, and my hail, and my snow drifts tost,

The long warm blue,  
Without a stain — or a feath'ry stain —  
Of the gauze-like vapour that gathers for rain,  
And the great Sun full and true !  
For He turned to gold the heavy grain,  
And to incense the grass on the farmer's wain ;  
But the shade of trees was there,  
And ye mark'd how the cattle the ford had found,  
And the distant ring of the summer sound  
Ye heard through the sleepy air.

## III.

Ye have lost the charm of Evening's mood,  
That luxury of lassitude —  
Refuge, at last, from scorching Day ;  
When, kerchief open'd wide,  
And broad hat held by ribbon gay,  
And rose-bud gather'd on her way,



She doubts if 'tis the moon's first ray  
That lights the chestnut's side, —  
That fairer girl than ye can say,  
And soon to be a Bride.

## IV.

The great trout leapt from the willow shade,  
Ye kenn'd the circle he, boist'rous, made ;  
Flash'd down the ripple, a wingèd sheen,  
The king-fisher, all red and green ;  
The cloud of gnats, like a pillar, stood  
Above the silence of the wood,  
Till from its depths, in gentle tone,  
The cushat spake with his mate alone ;  
But then — at last — ye said,  
It *is* the voice of the holy bird,  
The long, long thrill that is only heard  
When other sound is dead ;

And they prattled, at home, in the clear moonlight,  
We have heard the nightingale to-night.

## v.

I come, with my loyal heart,  
With Peace and Good Will unfeign'd,  
Mortal ! I come to thy selfish mart,  
From my home, to barter no dross with  
thee —  
My glorious home whose wealth is free —  
To tell thee what thou hast GAIN'D.

\* \* \* \* \*

## vi.

Ho ! dig away ! — the snow lies deep,  
No mortal foot such path may keep ;  
Nay, sweep it well, or we shall lose  
Old Betty's or My Lady's shoes.

Lo you ! a roaring fire is there, —  
That red-hot stove, the Sexton's care ;  
Nor less 'twas his to give to view  
That forest round the Squire's pew.  
The pulpit candles, hid from sight,  
No lucifer can ever light ;  
So large a bunch of prickly weed  
Must make the Parson's fingers bleed. —  
But more than rustic taste, I ween,  
The Holiest Place hath deck'd with green ;  
    And never be it said,  
Old England on THIS DAY forgot  
To clothe with Christmas-green the spot  
    Which most it hallowèd.

## VII.

The snow falls fast ! Each jocund bell  
Rings out of homeward steps to tell  
Their fathers knew and loved it well ;

It bless'd them on their marriage day,  
It bless'd them as they died away,  
It bless'd them aye at Christmas-tide,  
In benediction free and wide.  
Let it ring out their children's cheer !  
Bless honest feasts of beef and beer !  
Call all their brats, with close-shorn hair,  
A twelvemonth's revelry to share,  
With matrons, and with daughters fair !  
From stuff like theirs, that resteth now,  
Train'd to the sickle and the plough ;  
From hearts like theirs, to nature true,  
Britain her lines of battle drew :  
They fail'd her not in desp'rate day,  
CORUNNA's glory and her stay ;  
Reckless, forlorn, at BADAJOZ  
In them another rampart rose,  
Path for their comrades to their foes ;

These held your tatter'd flag on high  
When NILE's torn waters saw them die ;  
These cheer'd and wept when closed afar  
The bright sad day of TRAFALGAR.

## VIII.

I come in peace ! my Christmas tone  
Should be to strife and death unknown.  
I come in peace ! but bid you hold  
Their iron strength as sifted gold.  
Listen ! another day may see  
Stern battle for the fair and free,—  
Who then shall strike for liberty ?  
Oh, tend them well ! The sire's warm blood  
In children's veins hath gen'rous flood ;  
Wake it to life with kindly care,  
It bounds to martial glory there ;  
Wake it to life,—as heedless springs  
The spray that mountain torrent flings,

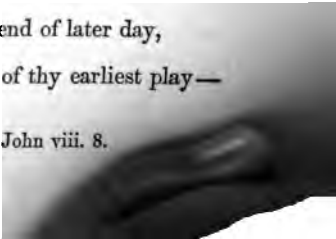
When the green moss in deeper green  
Beneath such living dew is seen,  
As that brave blood its life shall spare,  
So Britain bloom more bright and fair !

## IX.

Lord of the frozen stream, the short-lived day,  
From me Earth's gentler children shrink away ;  
The lines are furrow'd on my pale cold brow,  
I stand alone beside mine altars now.  
*They* are the deep white forests, and the peaks ;  
List ! on that driving blast their Victim shrieks !  
Yet do I bear—its warmth for ever shed—  
A holier fire than watchful Vestal fed :  
I took it from a star that stood above  
The great, poor home of Blessing and of Love.  
An old thin hand just trembled to the flame,—  
I touched his dying taper as it came ;

Here infant life implored one little part,—  
I held the glorious censer to his heart;  
There vig'rous health all hail'd me on my throne,  
And praying sickness sought my light alone.  
Aye, see me come!—stern Winter's Priest no  
more,—  
An Angel's hand hath touch'd thy op'ning door;  
'Tis he, poor prodigal,— he comes in fear  
In One Great Name, I bid him welcome here.  
'Tis she, alas!—I tell thee, on the ground \*  
Than thy cold sentence holier words are found.  
'Tis children's voices greet thee at the gate,  
'Tis grandsire's blessings on thy welcome wait;  
'Tis jovial game, 'tis courtly present sent,  
'Tis the full round of boist'rous merriment:  
I come with sober friend of later day,  
I come with comrade of thy earliest play—

\* St. John viii. 8.

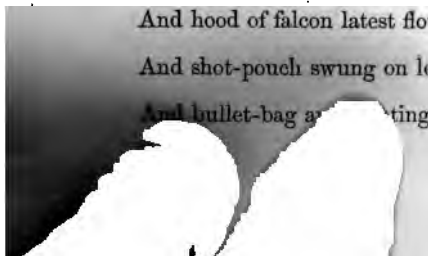


With music, flashing from the glancing keys,  
 With dearer tones of sweet-lipp'd minstrelsies;  
 I come with memories sacred to thy heart,  
 In new-born hopes I claim thy better part;  
 And first, and last, and best, ye know I come  
 To your bright hearths with the glad voice of—  
 HOME.

\* \* \* \* \*

## X.

Light up the lamps!—there hangs a tale  
 By Malcolm told of knoll and dale.  
 Yon antlers in the hall, whose tines  
 Late, drying, held his fishing lines,  
 With leash for greyhound, careless thrown,  
 And hood of falcon latest flown,  
 And shot-pouch swung on leather long,  
 And bullet-bag and hunting thong;—





Those antlers cost young Malcolm breath  
When, crouching low, past Craigmoor heath,  
Just where the ledge of rock rose high,  
His telescope had swept the sky—  
One rapid sweep, as though to gain  
The light he wanted for the plain—  
Then lower, and with patient care  
It sought the cliff and hollow bare :  
“ I have them !—’tis no wither’d bough ;  
It trembles, moves—I have them now !”  
O ! heed not blackcock, though he spring  
Under thy feet, on sounding wing ;  
Cast not a glance on forest roe,  
Though past thy path she bounding go :  
No corry and no burn to hide ?—  
Then must we climb the mountain side,  
Or lose the monarch in his pride.  
Three miles of crag ; whose eye grows dim ?  
Who quivers in each stalwart limb ?

Slacken an instant—lo ! the drip  
Of slow bright water ; wet thy lip.  
Now bravely on ! ye must not shake  
In one small nerve who gain the brake,  
And see him in the rushes lie ;—  
That cumbrous antler strikes the fly,  
A wanton movement ; now 'tis still,  
Straight looks he at the far blue hill,  
A round clear eye ; no fear hath he,  
'Tis nothing but a reverie ;  
Hold, Malcolm ! pause an instant now,  
Draw the broad kerchief o'er thy brow,  
Throw back the plaid—one deep-drawn breath—  
Thy knee amid the bending heath—  
Slow as is dial's shadow thrown,  
Rises the rifle o'er the stone ;  
Ah ! spake thy comrade ? for he springs  
Full to his feet ; the clear tube rings ;

Behind the shoulder's crashing bone,  
True to its fate, the ball hath flown,  
Haste, Malcolm ! for he is thine own !  
No need halloo to bloodhound there—  
He dies, the great stag, in his lair !  
Yet bear some pity in thine eye,  
To see him thus so grandly die !—  
The moral for another day :  
Ah, peevish children in our play,  
When half we doubt 'tis murder done,  
Or prize of perseverance won !

## XI.

One Christmas more ? Last year my lay  
Had promised *this* for Christmas day.  
True to a troth, as Minstrel 'seems,  
Ye have my folly and my dreams.  
Is it once *more* ? This brain may die,  
This hand beneath the sod may lie,

Or you, dear friends, may little care,  
If "Peregrine" hath pen to spare.  
Meanwhile, some falcons fast shall sweep  
For you the blue-arch'd circle deep;  
For you, this day, in bumper bright,  
Some ruby wine shall see the light;  
Health and good wishes, well I know,  
For you from honest heart shall flow;  
But most for him who many a time  
Hath loved to hear this wayward rhyme.—  
We, side by side, for many a day,  
Have snatch'd from stream our flashing prey;  
When, whirring, rose the covey brown,  
We, side by side, have struck them down.  
Health! Brother mine! God's blessing be  
Borne in this Christmas lay to thee!

## CHRISTMAS 1859.



## I.

Who comes with tears,  
With hoary beard and head ?  
CHRISTMAS ! Along the land he rears  
The form that for twice nine hundred years  
Hath lived among the dead ;

## II.

Hath lived through all,  
While, rank by rank, the old  
Have march'd with a sure foot-fall  
Their little march from font to pall,  
Each name on roll-call told.

## III.

Wizard ! thy spells  
Are set on the haggard face :  
With thee the shivering ague dwells,  
And gnawing Want to crime compels :  
Show us one sign of grace !

## IV.

Is it dark frost,  
Or scourge of lashing hail,  
Or reeling wreck on mad sea lost,  
Or the pale shroud on hill-side toss'd,  
That truthful tells thy tale ?

## V.

'Tis thus the cheerless fool, through life's fair way,  
Doth question of each cloud that shades the sun :  
The summer lightnings in the distance play —  
He deems them vanguard of the storm led on.

Or if, in very sooth, the tempest dun  
Rages awhile beneath his little sky,  
The coward deemeth all he looks upon  
For ever blacken'd with Destruction's dye—  
That there is nought of hope, and nought of shelter  
nigh.

## VI.

There is in each brave man a *second* heart,  
Another resolution, deep and still,  
Compress'd to earnest force; the shatter'd dart  
Flies from the temper'd shield of stubborn will;  
I laugh at foes that have no power to kill!  
Aye, rage in spleen, ye merry tempests wild—  
God and my conscience!—surfeit to your fill!  
I see *without* Life's haggard snowdrifts piled—  
*Within* 'tis ruddy blaze, and hearth that long hath  
smiled.

## VII.

Come, with thy nipping frost !

Come, with thy lashing hail !

We welcome the drift on the mountain toss'd,

Welcome the frown that thy brow hath cross'd !

*Thy heart* shall tell its tale.

## VIII.

For thou hast temples that are not skies,

And altars that are not hills,

And other eyes than angry eyes,

And veins that the warm blood fills.

Ah ! *rage without* ! — thou art WINTER there —

Fling o'er the fir-woods thy hoary hair ;

Chain, with thy cold hands, the tender streams,

Snap, with thy dark arms, the thin sunbeams,

Raise thy passionate voice on high

From the shivering earth to the tortured sky,



Shout in the tempest's din !  
But oh ! where hang the curtains red,  
Where yule and lamp their blaze have shed,  
In the homes where thou art worshippèd,  
Be CHRISTMAS all *within* !

## IX.

Well may gaunt Winter dread his doom,  
For Fairy's wand is in the room ;  
And glittering high its green boughs show  
The white gems of the mistletoe —  
From moon-lit snows, all dripping wet,  
They gleam like pearl-bound coronet, —  
They gleam beneath their ivy screen,  
And countless rubies flash between ;  
For on such eve the holly's glare  
Hath wealth of thousand rubies rare.

## x.

One little waft amid the light,  
Winter ; thy form hath lost its height ;  
No voice of storm — but Music's tone,  
No eye of ire — but Beauty's own !  
Sure some weird sprite, at gloaming sent,  
Thy beard hath torn, thy robes hath rent ;  
For, oped the latch, and pass'd the door,  
Lo ! thou art CHRISTMAS evermore ;  
Christmas, by every little hand  
Of blind-man's stretch'd tow'rds skulking band —  
Christmas, by every eager ring  
That dares, for plums, the dragon's sting ;  
Thine is the soft foot gleaming by,  
Thine timid glance of maiden shy ;  
That painted board is all thine own,  
With ruddy diamonds of Pope Joan ;

Flung down the counter and the card,  
Thine is the motley of charade,  
Where the mock lover's tender glance  
Preludes an earnest utterance. —  
The deep clear light is shining fair  
On the warm cheek and rich brown hair,  
Upon the grandsire's brow it lies,  
A glow of ancient memories ;  
Perchance a ruder mirth he knew,  
But Christmas mirth is always true :  
O ! sacred shall it ever be,  
In age, or youth, or poverty,  
    In wealth, in love, in fear !  
And prize for aye its holier part,  
In right of Him Who binds the heart  
    And wipes away the tear ! —

## XI.

And thus, as year by year, we trace  
Time's marks of age on Winter's face,  
Ever the young heart's merry chime  
Makes summer in the coldest clime, —  
And oft, in childhood's prattling tone,  
We catch old notes of pleasures gone ; —  
Our joyous rites of Christmas-tide  
Hold we as in our boyhood's pride,  
And gather round the festive cheer,  
The blithest circle of the year,  
    When brave old Christmas comes ;  
Oh ! time than any time more dear  
    To our dear English homes !

## XII.

As falcon on the crag's dark side,  
Rests in the quiet of her pride,

Now careless bites the straggling ling,  
Now smooths the long shafts of her wing, —  
O'er one raised foot her feathers close,  
In lassitude of half repose ;  
Calm is the round of her black eye  
Beneath the freedom of her sky ;  
Her friendly mountains seem to say,  
'Well dost thou know each airy way,  
For o'er our peaks and chasms strong  
Like lightning hast thou swept along ;'  
Rest she at *home* ; her dearest rest  
Hath ever been her mountain's breast,  
For she hath shelter, mate, and food  
Found in its glorious solitude.  
Aye, rests she there ; but lo ; amain  
The wild breeze moans on hill and plain,  
And the gaunt heron rises far,  
Like challenge of impending war.

'Tis *then*—one rustle through each plume,  
One kindling flash in eye of gloom,  
One little crouch of her true wings,  
And, desperate, in mid-air she springs ;  
Cleaves through the sky, resistless way,  
And rushes to the welcome fray.—  
Thus, sabre sheathed and banner furl'd,  
Looks Britain calmly on the world ;  
Unnumber'd homesteads stamp for her  
Indelibly a *character* :  
For where they rise warm hearts are found,  
And every hearth is holy ground ;  
And every rood and roof declare  
One interest and one love are there.  
Calm in her strength, her terrors still  
Rest like those pinions on the hill ;  
Peaceful the scene before her lies—  
Her land of glorious liberties,  
Her children fair, or brave, or wise !

But if, beyond her white cliffs, form  
The gathering clouds of passion's storm —  
If distant clash, like armours ring,  
Seems every threatening breeze to bring —  
Then, by the homes in which THIS DAY  
Ten thousand voices "welcome" say,  
By each dear form and lovely face  
In absence grown to riper grace,  
By holy tear of mother's joy  
Who clasps once more her darling boy,  
Nay, by the lightest word that tells  
Of home-born Love's entrancing spells,  
Each maid would point the way to fame,  
Each stripling rise in Freedom's name,  
Each living cliff gleam bright with steel,  
On thousand plains should squadrons wheel;  
For every treasured home should hold  
Some eager arm, some spirit bold —

Each song were battle-cry ;  
None need be told, where trumpets ring,  
How righteous and how sweet a thing  
'Tis for such hearths to die !

## XIII.

Ah ! brave Sir Squire, my warlike strain  
Hath deepen'd on thy cheek the vein ;  
'Tis the old blood that stirs apace,  
Though faint the tone my rhyme doth grace :  
Enough for thee if whisper'd word  
Speak of the charger and the sword —  
Enough for thee if note of war  
Through the uncertain distance jar ;  
The ashes of thy fathers lie  
'Neath the brave tombs of chivalry,  
Indifferent if from battle-sod  
They raise them at the call of God,



Or, from the sculptured marble rent,  
Burst through the labour'd cerement ; —  
Say not they took away the heart,  
The stalwart arm, the manly part !  
They left them, as the strong oak leaves  
Each vein that through the sapling weaves,—  
They left them, as the river, lost  
In the proud sea, still leaves a host  
Of other waters flashing on  
• Fast to the goal where it hath gone.

## XIV.

Oh ! honour'd be the antler'd halls,  
Ancestral tiers of pictured walls,  
The broad courtyard where, hounds among,  
Led steeds and mounted horsemen throng !

The labourer, in cottage shed,  
Still loves the chase, like huntsman bred ;  
Leans on his spade, and cheers the train  
As wakes the view-halloo again ;  
Worships in rude and humble sort  
The master of that gallant sport !  
Bid him, as were his fathers bade,  
With weapon strong his chief to aid ;  
Tell him to follow to the strife  
The lord he loved in peaceful life ;  
And, though ye prate of blood and birth,  
I tell thee there is none on earth  
    Bolder shall play his part ;  
For never knight, to tourney sent,  
Who carolling to battle went,  
    Had a more loyal heart.  
Preach to *him* peace that bears a stain !  
The coward heart, the shallow brain,

Shall ply their treacherous cant in vain,  
Scoff'd at by such as he ;  
He hath a pride that may not deign  
To stoop to infamy.

## xv.

Farewell ! but ere the minstrel may  
Claim fitting largess for his lay,  
Shall he not teach some lesson rare,  
Some moral point for lady fair —  
Beckon her lord, mid festive cheer,  
And bid him, of his grace, to hear ?—

## MORAL.

The voice that calls on armèd band,  
Binds us, as brothers, to one land —  
Tells us of ancient birthright, dear  
Alike to peasant and to peer :

At Freedom's and at Honour's name  
All voices rise with like acclaim,  
Alike the feeling, deep and strong,  
At threat of danger or of wrong,  
To *these*, thatch'd roof and cabin wall  
Have titles dear as marble hall.  
Know ye beside, that Christmas gave  
*One* right to hope, to trust, to save,  
And in its godlike precepts spake  
Of CHARITY — for Christ's own sake.

## XIV.

Lady ! thou hast the lily hand,  
And the eye of morning's light ;  
And I think, that of the angel band  
None is more purely bright,  
And a proud title of the land  
Is the least of thy birthright !

*They* know, who ope the lowly door,  
How mortal may a saint adore —  
They love thy voice of tenderest care,  
They cluster round thy smiles to share;  
Thy name, with Heaven's, at evening board,  
Is blest for such unwonted hoard;  
— Ah, Lady ! loved and honoured; long  
Be thy *life*, “moral” to my song !

## CHRISTMAS 1860.



## I.

A RIFLE on a foreign plain,  
And the thud of a striking ball !  
The tawny tag of a lion's mane,  
Dabbled with many a crimson stain,  
As he falls like a king in his own domain,  
As he falls as the mighty fall !

## II.

And O ! for a greyhound, rough and strong,  
To chase the kangaroo !  
As he flies, in his wond'rous leaps along,  
Like an arrow from the yew,  
Till they raise the thunder of the song  
That is his death-haloo !

## III.

Or away to the land where, in foam and flake,  
Niagara's strength is hurled,  
And the spray-cloud rises from that lake  
Like a battle-flag unfurled,—  
Like the ghosts of heroes that forsake  
Never a shaken world.

## IV.

Or haste thee to the land whose wonders vast  
Live still in shaft and pinnacle downcast,

Where woke th' immortal song of Troja's strife,  
Where Parian marble struggled into life;  
Or, where above the Yellow River's tide  
Stretched the long sceptre of the Latin pride;—  
Or, pilgrim to the land of sunrise sent,  
Seek the lost treasures of the Orient!  
There, on great Lebanon, the cedars stood,  
There, bow'd with purple fruit, lay Carmel's wood,  
Where still the spice-trees of Arabia stand  
And breathe their fragrance o'er the happy land;  
Or farther yet,—where LAYARD tore away  
The veil that hid the old world from the day,  
Pointed where Nineveh, all regal, sate,  
So glorious once, and now so desolate;  
*She* was the sceptred Queen of loftiest power,  
Strong as the mountain, lovely as the flower;  
A thousand perfumes floated thro' her sky,  
Her robes were deepened with the Tyrian dye;



Rich Ophir's gold, with priceless jewels set,  
Bound to her brow the blazing coronet ;  
Reckless in mirth and might, she swept along,  
Glittering with beauty, eloquent with song ;  
Hers the proud insolence that conquest brings,  
And hers the homage of her captive kings ; —  
Go now ! — and mark where, o'er her dreary  
grave,  
The strong plough furrows, and the corn-fields wave !

## v.

But, tho' the girth of the world I zone,  
One longing doth arise,  
It is for the land that I love alone,  
And the light of its colder skies,  
The glowing hearth that is all mine own,  
And the welcome of laughing eyes.

And wand'rer of the lightest heart,  
Tell me in simple word,  
Is all unknown to thee the smart,  
When thy England's voice is heard,  
When in fair vision, o'er the main,  
Thy white cliffs seem to shine again ?  
—The grouse lies on the purple hill,  
And you know the man who climbs it still,  
And with him side by side, you know  
Who clomb its heights a year ago ;  
And dotted is the cover-side  
With patches of red spots, far and wide ;  
And the hounds that came, in their streaming pride  
Of clustering sterns, have crossed the ride ;  
And you guess which speaks first on that jovial day,  
And you tear your hair as they view "him" away,  
And you curse the blue waves of your foreign  
bay.

## VI.

Then, these gusts of rage between,  
Come gentler, calmer thoughts I ween,  
And gorgeous sunsets, dark-fringed eyes  
Of Houri, fresh from paradise,  
The soft warmth that, voluptuous, lies  
In azure heavens of those bright skies,  
Are nought before the dearer prize : —  
What, tho' the fingers of the vine  
For thee their fairest tendrils twine,  
Tho' many a gaudy bird hath wing,  
And many a breeze doth incense bring  
    From all the orange flowers,  
O ! say not thou canst all forget  
The snowdrop and the violet,  
The sweet blush-rose so dripping wet,  
Fresh from thy England's showers !

Yea, for an instant, well I deem  
Thy heart still haunts the little stream,—  
Still melts as memory doth replace  
The image of one lovely face,  
And sometimes seeks the moon-lit vale  
That trembles to the nightingale.

## VII.

But, as our father's towers of old,  
Impregnable in fosse and hold,  
That rang with many a minstrel's lay  
In peaceful, and in pleasure's day,—  
When, dressed in marvel of the loom,  
With satin robe and heron's plume,  
And hound in leash, and hawk on hand,  
Rode to the chase the eager band,—  
Were ne'er, in all their soft repose,  
So loved as when beneath them rose

The wild war shout, and shafts were sent  
Against each stalwart battlement: —  
Thus seem our warm hearths dearer yet  
When the chill winter's sun hath set,  
And the loud winds, with hissing cry,  
Each corner and each crevice try;  
And the fair snow—false saint of light—  
Falls, subtle, through the long blind night;  
We hear the soft flake on the pane,  
We listen to the plunging rain;  
We know the hail, ten thousand strong,  
Hath led his clattering hosts along,  
Upon the sounding glass they reel,  
But the true casement stands like steel:  
Some stormed the hearth, but as they came  
They died upon the ruddy flame.  
What quaint hypocrisy! — we say  
“ Terrific night—tempestuous day! ”

And raise the brow, and shake the head,  
And wish the poor had better bread,  
And shudder when one says they lie  
By hundreds 'neath the raging sky ; —  
Heaven knows we hug ourselves to hear  
The bitter storm sing loud and clear ;  
—The stricken flame that leaps on high,  
The curtain drawn, the large lamp nigh,  
The chestnuts starting from the glow,  
The holly and the mistletoe,  
The hot wine spiced, the sofa wheeled  
Near where old Yule his heat doth yield,  
Our very kindred 'neath the roof  
So ample, and so tempest-proof,—  
What were all these without the blast  
That hath the monarch oak downcast,  
Without the snow-drift in the vale  
Where his last sleep slept Evan Gale,

Without the tyrant Cold, whose spleen  
But one stout wall doth stand between !

## VIII.

Hail Christmas ! — *four* times hailed ere now ;  
“ His snow-white head, and hoar-frost brow,”  
A hundred follies such as these,  
A hundred dressed-up similes,  
Fall on the ear all dead and dry,  
Cursed by an unreality.  
Yet, ere, upon this latest lay,  
I hear thy glad voice die away,  
Again I touch the op’ning door,  
Look on those merry romps once more,  
Hear the clear ringing laugh again,  
And listen to a Christmas strain.

## IX.

Yes ! it is true. The whole year round,  
Steamed, drenched, and sopped, and soaked, and  
drowned ;

The sun one finger scarce could reach  
To touch the soft cheek of the peach,  
While she, neglected day by day,  
Ne'er cared to don her rich array,  
Forgot, in dudgeon and in gloom,  
Each luscious sweet, each rich perfume :  
And, worse than all, the small brown brood  
Crept from their careful solitude  
To find the ants all massed in clay,  
Themselves washed off their tottering way,  
Their embryo breth'ren rolled along  
From some false slope by torrent strong : —  
Nay ! heed it not ! to-morrow's sun  
Shall burn these storm-clouds, rude and dun,



Another year such memories  
Be lost in blue of hollow skies !  
I rather mark that peaceful ease  
Where music slips from polished keys,  
Where, dearer than Spring's merry grove,  
Rings through the room the voice I love ;  
Nature ! I own thy lightest will,  
But glorious Art *is* Nature still !  
— And (who but he ?) Diana's priest !  
Captain of one ' eleven ' at least ;  
A decent oar ; at covert side  
As fair a seat as most who ride ;  
Well from the forearm and the wrist  
Drops his fly, light as morning's mist ;  
And seldom (never, he may say)  
Speeds the loud grouse unscathed away.  
Ah ! sixteen years, and Christmas time !—  
'Tis prettier prattle out of rhyme ;

I hear it oft—I like to hear  
The high-wrought memories of the year ;  
The poor boy lies not, or he dreams  
His wings of wax mock Christmas beams.  
— But you, you little miscreant, who  
Said you might bore the table through ?  
State on what ground, deliberately,  
You stood upon that Yorkshire pie !  
And then seven custards !—but you may  
Thank Heaven it still is Christmas Day.  
— Ah ! older pet—I see you there !  
A rose is pretty in brown hair,  
Besides it telleth to the snow  
That days were warm not long ago,  
And the white-headed grandsire knows  
A flower like thee is sweet in snows ;  
It blossoms like another flower  
Whose fragrance blest another bower ;

He tells thee not the year, the hour,  
But both he knows; — thy grandam child,  
For she could smile as thou hast smiled.

## X.

Ten thousand on ten thousand homesteads where,  
They seek to crush one other borrowed chair,—  
And broader floors, and halls, and palaces,  
*All* Christmas now beneath our England's skies;  
All tales domestic; hope, and love, and faith;  
One little world beneath one roof; no breath  
No whisper of the outer earth; they know,  
Or seek to learn, each other's joy or woe.  
— *No* theme extraneous? Yea one thrilling word  
Hath passed all roofs, all breasts; all souls hath  
stirred;  
It lived on a few tongues; it rose; it rung  
In thousand hymns of war by thousands sung;

It burst through massive gates ; its awful tone  
Shook armies, councils, princes, and a throne ; —  
Full in its wake they came, they bore a spell ;  
Before them rack, and gyves and dungeons fell ;  
That word ! O ! God, that Thou hast sent on earth  
Such courage, faith, such wisdom, and such worth ;  
How *could* they fail, how dream one dream of shame  
Who swore to soothe by GARIBALDI's name !

## H O P E.



## I.

It was a little thing,  
A little meagre thing,—  
Only a thought of other days—to bring  
A thrill that passed away :  
The merry merry bells they ring ;  
What do those clear bells say ?

## II.

They say that I was lost,  
In deep wood's dingle lost,

In the cold-hearted, shiv'ring crispèd frost,  
One day—long time ago ;  
And that my path a spirit crossed  
In white robe, soft and slow.

## III.

“ Hope ” is a little word ;  
It said a little word ;  
I hear it now, and all my life have heard,  
“ Hope ! there is yet a way ! ”  
I looked, but not a snow-branch stirred,  
But yet I found the day !

## IV.

'Twas bright beyond the wood,  
The tangled crackling wood ;

O ! but I ween my heart was gay and good  
That day—long time ago ;  
Since then 'gainst stouter thorns I've stood,  
And broke them at a blow.

## THE LATE SIR WILLIAM PEEL.



A great name written in our history,  
Twice written—for the father and the child !  
At first it rose majestic, like a star  
That makes us choose it out of all the heaven,  
And fell ; — but left its flashes. On the morrow  
A bright red shield was there, to pass unbroken ;  
How soon to pass ! Great men have lived a life,  
And scarce have dared more battles ; thou, brave  
heart,  
Fell young, and in the making of a fame.  
Thine the quick brain, the soul that knew not fear,



The subtle sense to note the fount of honor  
In its first sparkles. Thine the ready eye  
That sought thy Nelson's keel-prints on the wave,  
On shore the steps of heroes. The bronze cross  
Was thine, thrice won ; dead, thou shalt live while  
    life  
Is measured by its glory—not its span.

## THE REVIVAL.



He sits among his pile of books,

That shadow of a man ;

Is his heart written in his looks ?

Scan them who hearts can scan !

The hectic on his meagre cheeks

Stands out amidst the white ;

That line of curvèd frowns — it breaks

The brow of lofty might ;

Say, hath he in his heart that makes

One gentle thought and bright ?

I heard the breeze come whisp'ring there  
    'Twas breath of holy May ;  
I think it told him things he dare  
    Not hope — so bright were they :  
I saw the Sun's long finger flush  
    The paper as he wrote ;  
The lark's own voice came down, a gush  
    Of joy from joys remote —  
My God ! I saw the red blood rush,  
    As tho' his heart it smote.

Health glowed upon the wan cheek red,  
    And shone from out his eye,  
*Nature* one gentle word had said  
    As She came laughing by ;  
She led him back <sup>h</sup>where wild flowers bloom,  
    And where the wild birds sing ;

She peopled all that musty room  
With many a fairy thing ;  
Wove childhood's colours in her loom,  
And clothed his heart with Spring.

THE END.

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